AETC-NMC
AIDS Education and Training Center
National Multicultural Center
HOWARD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and Latino Model

Carmen, a 17-year-old Latina, shows up at a clinic for a gynecological exam. Carmen has been sexually active for over a year, and because she does not use condoms consistently, she is afraid that she may have contracted HIV or another STI.

Carmen's mother has insisted on accompanying her to the exam, which she believes, is only to discuss an irregular menstrual cycle that Carmen has been complaining about. When the provider asks Carmen if she would like her mother to stay for the exam, her mother says, "Of course she would, she has nothing to hide from me."

As the provider begins to ask Carmen questions related to her sexual health, it becomes obvious that Carmen is uncomfortable answering the questions in front of her mother.

When the provider asks if Carmen has ever engaged in sexual intercourse, Carmen glances over at her mother and then responds, "No, of course not." Carmen desperately wants to voice her concerns about the possible contraction of HIV or another disease but she is ashamed to admit to her mother that she has been sexually active, and therefore does not request the appropriate medical screenings.

Discussion Questions

1. What cultural beliefs and values contribute to Carmen's unwillingness to admit her sexual behavior in front of her mother?

2. How could the health care provider request that Carmen's mother leaves the exam room without offending her or implying that Carmen is hiding something from her?

3. How could the provider successfully address Carmen's health concerns and provide Carmen with sexual health information without causing a great amount of family discord between Carmen and her mother?

4. Discuss other Cultural Competence issues that may impact retention into care and treatment.